REPAIRING AND REBUILDING TRUST THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY TRUANCY BOARDS

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The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the characteristics of community truancy boards (CTBs) in one purposely selected Washington State high school. Chronic absenteeism in Washington State has been above 16% for several years, which is one of the highest rates in the country. Chronic absenteeism among historically marginalized students is even higher. Understanding the negative outcomes associated with chronic absenteeism, Washington legislators acted in 2016 and 2017, passing laws aimed at improving attendance. School districts in the state with more than 300 students are now required to hold CTBs, a collaboration of school, court, and community resource providers who meet with chronically absent families to problem-solve to address the reasons for the student's poor attendance.

Using a social capital framework lens, in this study I analyzed qualitative data from interviews, observations, and supporting documents. Participants provided insight into the entire CTB process. Findings include insights into educators’ beliefs about chronically absent students and their families and about the importance of building trusting, positive relationships between students, their families, and school staff. Participants suggested strategies for improving their CTBs, including a focus on school culture, climate, and early intervention, land for increasing the current CTB capacity and adjusting their network norms. The study concludes with a discussion of implications for educational policy, practice, and future research.